

ASCENSION ISLAND - SPEARFISHING



Ascension Island is a tiny dot of green in the tropical mid-Atlantic, a volcanic outpost of the English empire where it's hot and cold at the same time. It's a place where Charles Darwin helped inspire an alarming change, writes Matthew Teller. A scrap of British territory marooned in the tropical mid-Atlantic halfway between Brazil and Africa, Ascension is a place of enduring oddity.

The faintest flourish in the middle of the big blue canvas of the Atlantic Ocean, so Ascension Island is one of our planet's truly lonely lands.

For intrepid spearos that's part of its eccentric charm and the rewards here are superlative, in the form of great pelagics like massive Yellowfin Tuna of easily over 100kg, Big Eye Tuna, Wahoo, Sailfish & Marlin.

Modern visitors maroon themselves deliberately, to enjoy wild walking trails, welcoming locals and wonderful wildlife encounters.

Nowadays the island is the location of RAF (Royal Air Force), a European Space Agency rocket tracking station, an Anglo-American signals intelligence facility and the BBC World Service Atlantic Relay Station.

Officially, nobody is from there. The UK government denies the right of abode, turning Ascension's 800 citizens into temporary visitors. The airport (whose runway was once the longest in the world, designed to accommodate the Space Shuttle) is operated by the US Air Force, which grants limited access to Britain. Nasa tracked the Apollo Moon landings from Ascension and the European Space Agency monitors rocket launches from here.

TARGET SPECIES



Ascension Island is, simply put, a Jurassic Park of spearfishing. Blue and Black Marlin, as well as Yellowfin and Bigeye Tuna, in numbers and size roam these virtually untouched waters. The island is so remote, boat traffic, at its max, is minimal.

The main target here are monster (largest ones can be 150Kg) Yellowfin Tuna in plague proportions that swims around the island, at a short ride from the coast. We will use blue water hunting gear, with flasher and chumming, to attract these massive tuna. Once they are close, and after landing a god shot, the fight will begin. Here we are going to target big, really big fish, so there is no place for mistakes. The size of the fish will make of this adventure one of the most amazing trips ever.

The other species you will find here are the Bigeye Tuna, Wahoo, Dorado or Mahi Mahi, Sailfish, and the big and mighty Marlin, which is a common sight here and the chance to shoot one it's quite impressive, which makes this trip even more attractive. The marlin off Ascension are so big, that captains sometimes find "puny" 200-300 pound tuna to be pests.

Inshore species include Rock Hind (grouper), Amberjack, Almaco Jack, Black Jacks, Horse Eye Jacks and Rainbow Runners.

ACCOMODATION



The Obsidian Hotel is the only lodging on the island. The rooms are simple but clean, equipped with hot showers and comfortable beds, TV via satellite, telephone, fridge and tea making facilities and either a balcony or separate patio area. Rooms include a continental breakfast which is a good thing as unless you self cater there are no other options for breakfast on the island.

The Obsidian offers a range of accommodations, overall friendly and helpful staff and a reasonable place to stay even though you have no choice. That said, I would happily stay here again. With around 20 rooms is in the centre of Georgetown and within easy walking distance of everything in town as is the hotel's budget style accommodation.

BOAT



The boats are tiny but well equipped, more than enough for the short distance of the spots we are fishing in and the sea conditions and general weather.

SURROUNDINGS



Ascension's bizarre natural environment is the perfect setting for all this strangeness.

A geological infant, Ascension is the tip of an undersea volcano which rose above the waves only a million years ago. It may still have been erupting as recently as the 16th Century. The pounding Atlantic has barely begun to erode the contorted, charcoal-black lava flows that ring the island's shoreline, looking like they cooled yesterday. Until the British settled in 1815 it was uninhabited, and the largest land animal was a variety of land crab. "Near the coast, nothing grows and the island is entirely destitute of trees", wrote Charles Darwin.

Darwin discussed how to make Ascension more habitable for humans with his friend Joseph Hooker, later director of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, who visited in 1843. Hooker devised a plan. He would plant trees all over the 859m (2817ft) summit of Green Mountain, Ascension's highest point. Foliage would trap moisture from the warm southeasterly winds that sweep continuously over, letting it drip down to ground level to assure a water supply for the troops. He would introduce grasses to create pasture for livestock, and soil to plant vegetables.

There are stunning white sandy beaches and impressive volcanic rock formations including lava flows, fumaroles, and caves. The sea is crystal clear, tropically warm and abundant with marine life. As well as its natural heritage, Ascension has been an important strategic military outpost and there is a rich historical heritage on the island of abandoned forts, installations and dwellings dating back to the 18th century.

OTHER ACTIVITIES



Sport fishing and spearfishing is the main attraction for visitors to Ascension Island. There are also some beaches and ocean swimming in certain coves, such as Comfortless Cove and English Bay. Long Beach, as inviting as it looks, has a very hazardous undertow and is not suitable for sea bathing. However, it is a sheer delight for wildlife fans as this is where sea turtles go to nest. There are a few paths (such as Rupert's Path) suitable for hiking into the more lush highlands, as well as mountainside lava tubes to explore. The pastime of letterboxing, hiking to a destination that contains a "letterbox" containing a log book and a rubber stamp pad, is possible here.

Ascension Island features what was at one time reputed to be the world's worst golf course. Located between the settlements of Two Boats village and Georgetown, the course has 18 holes and the greens are better described as 'browns' due to the sand and oil mix used to make them. The rest of the course is made up of volcanic ash and rock, which makes for some interesting rounds.

There are fumaroles and lava tunnels to explore (at Command Hill, near the Catholic Grotto).

USEFUL INFORMATION



The island currency is the St Helena pound, which is fixed at parity with the pound sterling. Both are accepted at retail outlets and bars. Certain places, such as the US Air Force Base, accept both dollars and pounds. There are just a handful of shops which offer many of the groceries and household goods you will find in the United Kingdom. Bring British pounds in cash.

In terms of leisure activities there is a gym, several swimming pools, a cinema and plenty of outdoor activities such as wildlife sighting, hiking, cycling, snorkelling and SCUBA diving. Many residents also volunteer with the numerous types of environmental and conservation work underway on the island.

However Ascension offers an environment very different to many places, people are familiar and friendly. There are no traffic jams, no long commutes to work and everyone greets each other when out and about with a friendly wave. The pace of life is slower and more relaxed than the United Kingdom with an abundance of outdoor pursuits on your doorstep. The climate is wonderful and it is warm and sunny almost every day of the year. The climate is subtropical with temperatures ranging from 20°C to 38°C. Showers occur throughout the year with slightly heavier rains in the January to April period.

Ascension Island has monthly flights from Johannesburg by way of Saint Helena, operated by Airlink but the best option to get there it's the military charter flight from RAF Brize Norton close to Oxford in the United Kingdom. We will take care of all the organizational aspects and check that all paperwork is correctly filled out and submitted.

Because everything is imported, prices for food are very high on the island if you pretend to buy something extra not included in the trip program. Tap water is drinkable. The country code for Ascension is 247 and the population is too small to need area or trunk STD codes. Plugs are type G and wifi it's available in the Hotel for an extra price.

WHAT TO BRING



- All you spearfishing gear equipped with break away, floatlines, bungees, big floats, strong leader or dyneema, fins, knife, your mask, belt, etc.
- Spearguns (double rollers multiplied between 120 to 140cm are the best) with multiple shafts (8 to 9mm).
- Your beach clothes, hat, sunscreen, glasses, etc
- Your medicines if you need some.
- Passport with more than 6 months of validity.
- Camera
- Cash in £.
- Credit Card

MEDIA & GUIDING



As a Professional Freelance Audiovisual Producer & Fishing / Spearfishing Guide, my job is to promote the best trips around the world, operated by the best companies I work with, always offering the best quality and compromise. I will, simply, bring you the best destinations, personally known, that offer you all the guarantees and adapts to your necessities. If you are a group, great! If you are alone, don't worry, I will find more people to join you! Whatever you want, from hardcore fishing to family holiday, I will provide Expert Coaching, advices & knowledge in the field, to make you catch that "one in a life-time" fish, that sometimes can be so elusive and challenging.

I know where & when to find them, and how to get you on them!

I'm also a professional cinematographer & photographer, and I will be capturing footage of your experience so you can have high quality content of memories that will last a lifetime. My gear allows me to film from the sky, underwater and outside, with the best quality, so forget about the videos & photos, I will be there to capture every moment while in the water.

WHAT'S INCLUDED & WHAT'S NOT



Included

- 8 nights accommodation in the Obsidian Hotel in a double room in a shared occupation basis (single occupancy available upon request), with breakfast included and dinner.
- 6 full days of spearfishing, with meals & drinks aboard
- Expert guiding & Media coverage service
- Basic travel insurance
- Assistance 24/7
- Spearfishing gear for bluewater hunting. Floats, floatlines & break away (other gear available upon request)
- Transfers in the Island

Not included

- International flights
- Medical and evacuation insurance (mandatory)
- Visa (mandatory and very important)
- Other meals and drinks not included in the program
- Tips

NOTE: All travellers to Ascension Island require an entry permit visa made well in advance. Each person should have their flights booked, accommodation reservation and extended health insurance that covers emergency air evacuation and spearfishing related accidents in order to apply for the visa. We will guide you through all this process and we will make all reservations to avoid any problem.